

The Nineteenth Century Revised: Towards a New Narrative on Europe's Past*

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Pozměněný pohled na devatenácté století: K novému příběhu o evropské minulosti

Abstract: The conventional history of Europe, connecting the Enlightenment heritage with our time, makes a huge detour around the violent nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth one. The article explores the European peace utopias of 1815, 1918 and 1951, and their eventual loss of suggestive force, and argues that they link today's global Europe to the post-Napoleonic world two hundred years ago. This connection, through a series of illusions and disillusiones about the nature of politics, represents a different view on the nineteenth and twentieth century than the conventional teleological narrative about fulfilment of the Enlightenment promise of progress. The analysis of the bicentenary chain of shifts between postwar, prewar and war should not be read in terms of a teleology necessitating a new war; the point is, rather to draw attention to the fragility and openness of historical processes. The new narrative outlined here emphasizes that there was no necessity in the development towards today's Europe; the story is full of alternatives, and highlights the role as well as the responsibility of human agency. No solution appears as a necessary result of impersonal forces, everything has depended, and continues to depend, on human choice.

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The European Commission is in search of a new master narrative. On several occasions, ex-president Barroso has stressed Europe's need for a new narrative and initiated work on it. A new narrative, or a new interpretative framework, a new mobilizing language, is – as he argues – the tool to stop the ongoing upsurge of nationalist ideologies and xenophobia, a development that threatens to tear Europe apart.

The Commission is right in its argument that there is an existential need for a new convincing language that would again make Europe a central domain of hopes and expectations. Europe today teeters upon a precipice; the apparent choice placed before its people seems to be one between dissolution and a union subordinated to the demands of the bond markets. Behind the strident political rhetoric that accompanies this dilemma lies a profound failure of political imagination that emerges from a deeply a-historical view of Europe's past. There is an urgent need for a more realistic history that rejects any teleological understanding of Europe as a self-propelling project on a steady advance towards

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a predetermined goal. Instead, the historical fragility of European peace and progress, so evident today, needs to be highlighted. Yes, a new narrative, but what narrative?

The conventional history that connects the Enlightenment heritage with our own time makes a huge detour around the violent nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Doing this, it ignores the recurring violence so obvious today. It seems that this is the story that the Commission wants to reanimate. Thereby it ignores an alternative historical legacy worth remembering, which highlights the dark ambiguities of the European inheritance, which intertwines warfare and welfare. Europe's past is warning as much as promise.

Europe's peace utopias in 1815, 1919 and 1951, and their eventual loss of suggestive force, connect today's global Europe with the post-Napoleonic world two hundred years ago. This connection through a series of illusions and disillusionments about the nature of politics represents a different view on the nineteenth and twentieth century than the conventional teleological narrative about fulfillment of the enlightenment promise of progress. The analysis of the bicentenary chain of shifts between postwar, prewar and war should, emphatically, not be read as a teleology moving towards a new war, but draw attention to the fragility and openness of historical processes. The new narrative model must emphasize that there was no necessity in the development towards today's Europe, it was full of alternatives. The narrative road must highlight the role and responsibility of human agency. It must argue that no solution has been the necessary result of impersonal forces, everything has depended, and continues to depend, on human choice. A new narrative about Europe, a new historical understanding of today's Europe, an interpretation of its past must emphasize the fragility of human projects, the openness towards the future, and the responsibility of human agency.

What connects our time with the violent time two hundred years ago, following the French revolution, is a chain of postwar peace treaties under the motto of 'never again' – prewar-war–postwar treaty of never again – prewar-war–postwar treaty of never again, where the question is whether the third postwar is still a relevant description of our time. This question is, of course, an impossible question, since it can only be answered through the filter of a new war, but nevertheless worth reflection.

Three postwar utopias of peace connect the revolutionary world of warfare around 1800 with our time: the Vienna peace treaty in 1815, which tried to stabilize Europe after the revolution and the Napoleonic wars, the Versailles peace treaty in 1919 after World War I and the Paris treaty on a European Coal and Steel Community in 1951. The third peace utopia was the response of never again to World War II after the victors had failed to agree on a peace to negotiate with (Vienna), or impose on (Versailles) the loser, which like in Versailles was Germany. The peace was an armed peace and a new friend-enemy demarcation dividing the camp of the former victors, the West against the East: the Cold War. The motto of 'never again' narrowed down from a claim for permanent world peace in 1815 and 1919 to a rejection of war between Germany and France.

It is important to emphasize that there was no necessity in this development, which was full of alternatives. A new master tale must confront the conventional narrative about Europe as a self-propelling machine fuelled by Enlightenment values and belief in progress, but must carefully avoid outlining a negative counter-narrative about a continuous European tragedy of fate from postwar to prewar and war. The futures in the past were as open as ours.

The connection of today's global Europe with the post-Napoleonic world two hundred years ago, through the three peace utopias and their eventual loss of suggestive force, represents a different view on the nineteenth and twentieth century than the conventional teleological narrative about fulfillment of the enlightenment promise of progress. A crucial question, silenced in the conventional understanding of Europe's past, deals with how postwar became prewar.

The search for answers to this question focuses on a series of tensions which marked the European bi-century since 1815: between economic integration and social disintegration, i.e. between property and poverty, between constitutions legitimizing authoritarian power and constitutions legitimizing parliamentary power, between geopolitics for purposes of military and commercial power and international law for the regulation of the global geopolitical conflict. These tensions had to do with the securing of welfare, the creation of political and cultural community, and the ordering of the world.

The nineteenth century has conventionally been seen as an epoch during which the ideas of the French revolution – freedom, equality and solidarity (brotherhood) – began to be implemented. It was in this period that the long, problem-ridden yet irreversible road from authoritarian rule towards constitutional monarchies and ultimately also parliamentary democracies began. Industrial capitalism spread, transforming poor societies into wealthy ones. European empires laid without much noise a web of military, economic and cultural power over the world. Seen in this light, the Vienna peace treaty of 1815 translated the experiences of the French revolution and Napoleon into a century of continental peace and stability.

However, this imagery, connecting fundamental enlightenment values to the present is too simplistic. It offers little insight into the reasons behind the outbreak of two connected world wars and the Russian revolution. Nor does it explain the continental experiences of totalitarianism in the twentieth century. The nineteenth century was far from a teleology of political and economic development from authoritarianism and penury to democracy and general wealth, as the dominating narrative suggests.

In the bicentenary sequence 'postwar–prewar–war–postwar–prewar–war–postwar', 'postwar' meant the concerted attempts at European unification under the motto of never again, prewar meant the erosion, and war the collapse of these attempts. The postwar designs were all attempts to transcend the nations as the locus of political community. They all aimed at creating a European order or community, in Versailles the goal was even a global international community around the League. The repeated attempts to transcend the nation as an organizational principle do not add up to teleological understandings of Europe. In the prewar and war phases, nationalism replaced the vision of never again through international cooperation. Nationalism defeated the dreams of European unification.

The utopia of legal regulation of international politics

The postwar visions of never again were utopian. Historically 'never again' is certainly formally true in the sense that history never repeats itself. To be sure, there are reiterative structures, *Wiederholungsstrukturen*, but the point is that these connect with an infinite spectrum of new elements. Therefore, although they might be similar or analogous, no

historical situation is identical to another [Koselleck 2003 (2000)]. In our case, 'never again' was and is utopian in the somewhat different sense that it maintains that social conflicts and claims for change of human conditions can be avoided through legal arrangements. The belief in the potential for the elimination of conflicts and in predictability and management of the future through international rules and agreements constitutes the core of the utopian fantasy in the three cases referred to here.

The utopian belief in question here, which began in Vienna in 1815, is that interstate stability based on intrastate stability, domestic social peace, could be achieved through a 'de-politicization' of interstate relations by means of a peace treaty and various models of political economic growth. According to this vision, international and domestic order and stability constituted one another and could be established via international treaties and a political economy of growth which provided the grease for social peace.

This approach to utopia plays down utopia as a dream of taking down heaven to earth or as an apocalyptic final destruction of the old, existing world as the basis of the final construction of a new world. It is an approach to utopia that keeps it at the level of political practice within a stable legal framework rather than political dreams, although, admittedly, there is no clear distinction between these categories.

This approach to utopia focuses precisely on those utopias which functioned as attempts to stabilize, to prevent dramatic change, to 'freeze time', to organize an order ever more conceived in terms of stability through progress. The focus is not on utopia as revolution but on utopia as social and political stability through economic progress. Utopias emerged to stabilize progress. In all three cases the notion that stability required a functioning economy of growth defined in global terms was central.

The organization of stability and order appealed to law, in particular international law, which was mobilized as a stabilizing instrument and as a means of preventing revolutionary violence or mass wars. Utopian beliefs in law as a regulatory framework enclosing politics prevailed in these situations. This understanding of utopia refers to its harnessing of everyday politics. Everyday utopia is the belief in the future as progress, and at the same time stability through managing and mastering the world, the belief in a project with a clear normative design and architecture.

Utopia in this sense is an instrument in the contested territory and grey zone between the extremes of revolution and anti-revolution, where history is a struggle about the future, where politics is muddling through, and where there is a continuous negotiation and re-negotiation of values. The utopian belief in a stable regulating order and in some permanence provides some clarity – illusory or not – in this foggy terrain.

This approach connects to and draws on Martti Koskenniemi's *From Apology to Utopia*, which adopts a critical view on the relationships between international law and politics, arguing that a professional cadre of international lawyers emerged in the nineteenth century and that central to their self-understanding was the notion that politics and law were separate units. They saw (international) law as a prescriptive norm, which set the rules of the game of (international) politics [Koskenniemi 2005: 17–19, 54–60, 563–576].

In order to provide such a prescriptive norm (international) law would have needed the capacity to predict all conceivable situations requiring political action, a condition, which, of course, was and remains impossible to fulfill because history does not repeat itself and therefore does not serve as *vitae magistra*. The international lawyers' argument

that (international) law was enshrined in universally valid rules reflecting the will of the legislator, and that they had the tool to translate universal natural law to concrete positive law covering the full range of possible cases, was normatively powerful but not a very useful guide when political actors looked for legal advice in specific situations or when they showed little regard for the legal framework. Critics held that legal rules and principles have no reality and argued that the performance of international lawyers was mere utopian hypothesizing. Legal concepts were either utopian speculation by international lawyers or instruments of political struggle to advance interests, international law as apology. The view emerged that (international) law was not enshrined in rules reflecting some superior and universally applicable will of the legislator but in broad politics responding to power political interests or functional needs of society, which were redefined continuously in changing concrete historical situations, although legitimized by references to the norm. Rather than being an a-political prescription of political action, law was used to legitimize concrete political practices and expressions of will and interest, which could not have been foreseen when the law was made. This was law as apology, law as justification of whatever political decision as opposed to law as binding political practices regardless of behaviour, will or interest.

Neither utopian legal prescription of what to do nor apologetic political description of what has been done can be consistently preferred, however, because law cannot predict every situation that requires political action, nor is it able to legitimize every political action *ex post*. The use of law oscillated between prescription and description, utopia and apology, law *ex ante* and law *ex post*, but at some point the movement ceased and the peace treaty of never again lost attraction both as legal lodestar and as retrospect point of reference.

This view on utopia, and the interplay between legal rhetoric as prescription and as description is a tool to understand the establishment and final destruction or erosion of the three peace utopias. Law is both utopia and apology although not at the same time; utopia, in that it tries to define and add a regulatory framework to a middle ground of no conflicts and apology since legal arguments are brought forward in order to retrospectively justify actual political decisions even if they violate the utopian norm, and at some point it loses relevance.

A new narrative on the past of today's Europe needs to address this relationship between law and politics. However, the issue is more complicated. The design of a political economy of growth was central in all three peace treaties and the relationships between economic theory and politics can be described analogically. The economists elaborated mobilizing narratives about how the economy functioned. These narratives were as utopian as the legal peace treaties. They promised to provide blueprints for lasting economic progress and social justice. The most convincing tales during the bi-century since Vienna were the classical and neoclassical theories in the wake of Adam Smith, Karl Marx's critique of this liberal narrative, J. M. Keynes's attempt to reformulate it by paying more attention to the role of the state and the psychology of the masses, and Friedrich Hayek's purge of the economy from state influence under the term 'neoliberal'. In one sense these narratives succeeded each other chronologically, in another sense they co-existed in a growing number over time. One of them might have been predominating for a certain time, even been hegemonic, but the others existed as sub-currents of more or less latent challenges. They

all co-existed, intertwined as well as demarcated. These tales of the economists were all utopias in the same sense as the peace treaties of never again. They pretended to provide the prescriptions for economic growth and social wealth. However, they all failed in their prescription for a better world. Their normative *prescription* became *ex post* descriptions of political decisions legitimized through references to the economic theory, even if the decisions were far from the theoretical prescriptions.

The social and the national questions

Nationalism – together with democracy – was the great threat to the order that the Directorate wanted to establish in Vienna. Nationalism remains the great threat to the European order in the present. Nationalism is an Ariadne thread through the two centuries since Vienna, which is not to say that it has been a constant. Nationalism has shown many shifting faces and phases.

In the vein of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, Anthony Smith and many others one can see nationalism as a social construct, an attempt to construct community against the backdrop of the challenges of modernity which often resulted in experiences of a lack of community and social cohesion. Gellner, in particular, emphasized the nation as the community produced by the modern state. Modern school teaching and mass alphabetization were important conveyors of nationalism. One of the most efficient instruments in the intellectual building of nations through nationalism was the imagery of ethnic demarcation to other nations with language as the most distinctive mark. Ethnicity was a basic building material of nationalism [Gellner 1983; Anderson 1982; Hobsbawm 1990]¹. Of course, propagators of nationalism do not regard the nation as constructed but as given. Nevertheless, or exactly therefore, primordialist or essentialising theories of ethnicity or national self-determination must be rejected. Ethnic identities are politically constructed, manipulated and changed.

Not only ethnicity through language but also other demarcations like religion were used in the construction of nations through nationalism. Histories and traditions were constructed and mobilized in order to underpin the demarcations between fictions of nations demarcated by imageries of Us and Them, friend and enemy. History was used as retrospective mythology based on selection of facts to remember, but also of what to forget as Ernest Renan phrased it in a classic statement: “Forgetting history, or even getting history wrong are an essential factor in the formation of a nation, which is why the progress of historical studies is often dangerous to a nationality” [Renan 1882]. Critical history might in other words not only be constructive but also deconstructive and ideologically explosive.

¹ They all conflated nation as community and nationalism as ideology. Miroslav Hroch [1985] also made a crucial contribution in the constructivist vein through his analysis of the occupational composition and background of nationalist activists in some of Europe's small nations during the nineteenth century [Hroch 1985]. To a large extent, the constructivists built on Hans Kohn's seminal work [Kohn 1969 (1944)], where nationalism appears as an artificial historical construct, a nineteenth-century addition to older feelings of love for one's place, language and customs. Anthony Smith [1991] relativized the constructivist approach by the argument that modern nations did not crystallize *ex nihilo*. In most cases they emerged from earlier ethnic communities which shared traits such as language, traditions, memories, beliefs in common descent, and sense of collective identity.

However, there was also the understanding of the nation in the French revolution, less in terms of (ethnic) demarcation to other nations than in terms of unification of the citizens around a programme for political and social rights within a state nation: civic nationalism. This was the kind of liberal nationalism that Giuseppe Mazzini, a generation after the French revolution, propagated linking it to cosmopolitan ideas.

A key question deals with how the nineteenth and twentieth century debates on the social question, thematized since the 1830s, and on the class question, thematized since the 1870s, connected to and influenced ethnic and civic versions of nationalism. In economies and polities reorganized through the spread of industrial capitalism, ethnic groups defined in homogenizing terms competed for scarce resources in the same labour or housing or educational or other markets, and proved to be less homogenous than they were meant to be. In their competition, at least for the disadvantaged, group pressure for special favours through 'affirmative action' was a powerful weapon confronting the imagery of national unification [Hobsbawm 1992].

In these processes of destabilization of national unity strangers came to be defined in xenophobic terms. Jobs and wages were defended against strangers in situations of tighter labour markets and uncertain future prospects. Reactions to social disintegration aimed at national reintegration of a new kind. The basis of today's French *Front National* and other similar nationalist movements all over Europe is recruited from the lower classes. Eric Hobsbawm has explained the connection between nationalism and poverty:

But for those who can no longer rely on belonging anywhere else, there is at least one other imagined community to which one can belong: which is permanent, indestructible, and whose membership is certain. Once again, 'the nation', or the ethnic group, 'appears as the ultimate guarantee' when society fails. (...) xenophobia looks like becoming the mass ideology of the 20th century *fin de siècle*. What holds humanity together today is the denial of what the human race has in common [Hobsbawm 1992: 7–8].

Bottom-up pressures for national integration led to top-down attempts to control and canalise the pressures. The responses to the social protest covered a broad spectrum from bottom-up populist people's tribunals and top-down Bonapartism to conservative paternalism. Bismarck's imagery of state socialism or social nationalism, which rather than emphasising citizenship or ethnic belonging offered a social paternalism, instead of political rights or ethno-cultural similarity a moral tie linking subjects with the state, mutated into the paternalist Soviet system where the citizens, as in Bismarck's world, were not citizens but subjects presumed to be neither politically active nor ethnically similar to each other, but loyal and grateful recipients. Both orders produced dependency rather than agency.²

Hobsbawm's *fin de siècle* ethnic nationalism in Eastern Europe was the alternative to social paternalism that emerged after the implosion of the Soviet empire. It spread to the core of Western Europe in the 2000s as an alternative to the promises of the 1990s of prosperity through market, civil society and global networks of smooth governance. With the implosion of the Soviet Union eroded also the social imaginary of the Western welfare states. The restructuring of the economy, in particular the labour markets since the 1970s, was speeded up and accompanied by the new market language. The liberal market nations

² See Verdery [1992] and for Bonapartism, or caesarism, Prutsch [forthcoming].

succeeded the social state nations in Western Europe. When doubts about the social capacity of the market nations emerged against the backdrop of persisting mass unemployment on precarious labour markets and of growing income cleavages the xenophobic ethnic nations also revived in the West, conjured up from history as a new asylum of social justice and peace also in the West.

The struggle with nationalism – in the double sense of struggle *against* it and *with* it as an ideological tool – was at the beginning, for the Vienna Directorate, a struggle with civic nationalism demanding popular sovereignty, as opposed to constitutional monarchical rule in more or less enlightened forms of absolutism. There was certainly an ethnic dimension in the definition of the nation but that dimension was rather played down. The ethnic dimension was more present in the early post-Vienna dreams about Italian and German unification or claims for national sovereignty in Southern Europe, but the focus was on civic claims. Giuseppe Mazzini's project for a European unification of the new liberal nations based on people's sovereignty is a case in point. The demarcation between the nations was in his project compatible with cosmopolitan cooperation among them.

Liberal civic nationalism had few answers when the spread of industrial capitalism in the 1830s brought forward what was called the social question, which demonstrated that national unification under the label of popular sovereignty did not necessarily mean social unification. Industrial capitalism split the nations between those with property and those with poverty.

Social conservative, social democratic and gradually also social liberal approaches tried to combine a civic and a social definition of the nation. The social conservatives did it more in social paternalist top-down forms in order to integrate the subjects of the ruler rather than emancipate them as citizens. The social democratic bottom-up approach driven by the growing class language from the 1870s onwards focussed on the enlargement of the citizen rights to the lower classes. The social conservatives developed concessions as a strategy to prevent revolutions, the social democrats struggled for a social definition of citizenship. The conservative model worked with imaginaries of social monarchy, state socialism, social nationalism or national socialism as a counter-solution to the class struggle socialism. The social integration of the nations occurred as competition between top-down and bottom-up approaches.

The work on social integration led to attempts to strengthen the national unification through strong Us-They/friend-enemy demarcations. Ethnic nationalism underpinned conservative social nationalism. Social imperialism was one expression of the unification of the ethnic and the social in a perverted Darwinian / Spencerian perspective of nations in competitive struggle for survival on world markets. The entanglement of the social and the ethnic was a strong mix which linked welfare to warfare and played down the role of civic nationalism. The entanglement paved the way towards 1914, which is not the same as saying that it caused the world war, since this was a much more complex issue. However, the social-ethnic nationalism was one crucial factor behind the outbreak of the war.

Nationalism supported empire. This was obvious in the national/imperial unifications of Italy and Germany, where the social-ethnic nationalism was particularly crucial in the German case. The French empire collapsed in 1871 when the German one stood up. However, the Third Republic performed as a civic-ethnic/racial empire supported by a civic-ethnic/racial nationalism. The British empire was like the French republic on a civilizing

world mission. In the Russian, Habsburg and Ottoman multi-ethnic empires nationalism was rather used as a device to negotiate degrees of national autonomy within the empires. Finland, Poland and Hungary represent different approaches in that respect.³

Versailles 1919 tried to combine civic nationalism and democracy under a world confederation for peace. Mazzini's project recurred, and like his without any special attention to the social question. The liberal attempt faced two great challenges:

- 1) Free trade, followed up with the gold standard for monetary stability, failed to cope with the social disintegration. This was obvious at the latest during the Great Depression when the social protests enforced general abandonment of the gold standard, and promoted protectionism which linked up with more ethnic forms of nationalism. Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries were among those countries which managed to maintain a strong civic dimension of the protectionist social nationalism. The decisive trend in the wake of the break-down of the Versailles order went in the social-ethnic totalitarian direction, however.
- 2) Minorities took Woodrow Wilson's promise of national sovereignty seriously and reinforced the ethnic dimension in their claims. The ethnic struggle about who was included in the civic nation changed the peace conceptualisation of the nation in Versailles. A particular and fateful bias in the peace utopia was that the principle of national sovereignty was not applied for Germany.

Whereas the nineteenth-twentieth century development of social nationalism often went together with ethnic nationalism, there was continuously a social-democratic and social-liberal approach which sought to combine social and civic nationalism. The shifting power relationships between these two trends in various parts of Europe determined the shape of nationalism.

The Cold War brought the (West) European rescue of the nation state around the idea of welfare through economic growth and free trade. A division of labour emerged in the European integration project between the community and the member state levels. This (West) European model for a civic social nationalism in national welfare communities of destiny in the framework of the Cold War was the closest the continent came to Mazzini's ideal of a merger of national sovereignty and international cooperation in a *sui generis* arrangement. As opposed to Mazzini's vision the model in the 1950s and 1960s was based on an elaborated political economy which de-ethnicized the West-European nations and transformed them to national communities of destiny based on the provision of welfare. This was the utopia of Keynes, building on a different Us-They demarcation than ethnicity, namely ideology, the demarcation between liberal Western and communist Eastern Europe. The civic nationalism promoted by the European integration project had a more distinct social profile than Mazzini's model and the key word was welfare rather than citizen. Nationalism is maybe not the right label, since it was less the matter of a loud ideology propagating the nation as opposed to other nations than softer feelings of national community and allegiance which emerged through welfare. Another difference was that the West European unification was far from Mazzini's cosmopolitan cooperation between the nations. It was a unification of states, rather than nations, prepared for war in the iron cage of the Cold War. Allocation of welfare was a key tool in this preparation for warfare.

³ For a comparison of the Russian and Ottoman empires, see Brisku [forthcoming].

The collapse of the Bretton Woods order and the transformation of the labour markets in the 1970s with mass unemployment and social marginalisation eroded the social integration and its imagery of affluent society. The new segmentation on the labour markets around company-specific schedules which differentiated between fixed and occasional employment broke down national solidarity patterns and identity constructions since the 1870s. The Keynesian utopia of the European rescue of the nation states lost also apologetic credibility as a legitimising point of reference.

Hayek replaced Keynes as a utopian guide. In the Hayekian neoliberal utopia the social dimension was lost, and the new civic nations were based on individual market-oriented European and national citizens. 'Privatisation' was a new key word meaning the outsourcing of welfare commitments from the public sphere to private entrepreneurship. After 1990 and the collapse of the Soviet empire the utopian prescription was in that respect the same in both Eastern and Western Europe, but the consequences were much more palpable in the East where hordes of Western economic experts recommended massive sales of state property to private interests as the fast royal road to democracy. The privatisation project in Russia but also in other parts of the former Soviet Union like Ukraine ended up in a system of superrich oligarchs.

For most of the former Soviet satellites in central and Eastern Europe the door to membership in the EU opened. The internal market promised Western capital investments in the East for the reconstruction of the Central and East European economies with growing employment prospects and increasing wages there, and, in addition, employment possibilities in the West for labour from the East. The neoliberal theory promised to have the key to fast modernisation in Eastern Europe which also was the key to democracy. However, the neoliberal promise and prescription for Eastern Europe propagated by the Western economic experts and governments met with resistance from the populations in the West. The Western populations imagined cheap labour *from* the East forcing down wages in the West, and cheap labour *in* the East inciting companies to move there with jobs from the West. The fear of such developments made deep inroads into the middle classes in the West who put pressures for protection on their governments. The social question was no longer an exclusive concern of the lower classes. The horizons of expectations outlined in the East after the fall of the Soviet system narrowed down to gloomy perspectives of wage dumping and loss of jobs in the West, and of discrimination and exclusion ('social tourism') for labour from the East on Western labour markets, perspectives which triggered xenophobic sentiments and ethnic nationalism.

Welfare and warfare

Nobody knew better how to exploit and politically shape the entangled dynamics of the social and the national issues than Otto von Bismarck. He appropriated the social question from the socialists and the national question from the liberals. He combined welfare and warfare in a programme for a new kind of social integration of all classes and for German imperial unification through a series of wars against the neighbouring states of Denmark, Austria and France. The fact that he did not hesitate to get rid of competition from the Habsburgs by excluding German-speaking Austria from the national unification demonstrates his capacity to adapt strong ideological rhetoric to *Realpolitik* and his capacity to

steer opinions rather than riding on them. Bismarck deconstructed the foundation of the peace utopia in Vienna and put Europe on a new track. The imagery of social monarchy based on a unification of *Kaiser* and *Volk* was his loadstar. He tried to keep his model at a European level, but he released forces that he could not stop. After the unification in 1871, at first seen as a final goal, he was drawn into colonial expansion in the 1880s. Wilhelm II thought that Bismarck was too cautious and dismissed him in 1890. The emperor radicalised Bismarck's politics and connected his vision of social monarchy to the politics of social imperialism.⁴

On the basis of warfare and welfare Bismarck confronted and nullified the Vienna peace treaty. Before him Cavour had done the same for Italy, although there the goal of the unification was rather the completion of Mazzini's liberal unification project than the integration of the working class, which hardly existed as a class in Italy at this time. In Vienna the goal had been to contain the continental power of Russia against the maritime power of Britain through a protective belt of German and Italian states monitored by Prussia and Austria. This balance between the land and the maritime powers was maintained in Europe but soon developed into a conflict in Asia. After German unification the British-Russian polarity became a British-German-Russian triangular tension where France sided with Britain, and later also with Russia, and Austria and Italy with Germany. The Vienna polarity became multipolar. The growing social tensions after 1870 rejected the free trade ideology and protectionism spread across Europe emphasizing the reinforcement of national borders. Protectionism was an instrument to decrease social tensions and promote feelings of national community but increased international tensions.

Major ruptures in the bicentenary European search for a global political economy occurred in the 1870s, the 1920s/1930s, and the 1970s/1990s. In all three ruptures the crucial problem was the linkage between welfare and warfare. The rupture in the 1870s took the form of a geopolitical shift as Bismarck and Cavour confronted the Vienna peace and the British hegemony through the establishment of a new kind of power balance based on a pact system and empire building.

Germany and Italy were similarly central in the next rupture which took place during the 1920s and the 1930s. Their imperial expansion confronted the peace utopia of Versailles and their transition from democracies to totalitarian regimes was entirely at odds with the programme championed by Woodrow Wilson. Italy followed by Germany developed alternative politics when the attempts in 1919 to reestablish a liberal economy failed. The emphasis on state and welfare in fascism and Nazism thus constituted a degree of continuity with Bismarck's policies, which also took place against the backdrop of a deep crisis of economic liberalism. The instrument for domestic peace was warfare. Until the mid-1930s Roosevelt was very interested in the German and Italian crisis therapies in his own search for a solution to the economic collapse in 1929. It was only when the German and Italian warfare politics inside and outside Europe (beginning with the conquest of Ethiopia) became too ostentatious that he demarcated himself from the Nazi and fascist regimes.⁵

⁴ For social monarchy, see von Stein [1848 (1842); 1855]. For social imperialism, see Wehler [1969; 1977 (1973)].

⁵ For Roosevelt's interest in the German and Italian crisis therapies, see Schivelbusch [2005].

The third rupture in the 1970s and 1980s – connected to the end of the reconstruction boom in both the West and the East and the emergence of a new international order in the wake of de-colonialism – occurred in the framework of economic stagnation leading to the end of the era of planned economy in mixed or pure form, ten years earlier in the West than in the East. In the ex-post neoliberal explanations the collapse of the American economic and political hegemony in the Western sphere and of the Soviet hegemony in the Eastern sphere of the Cold War was frequently referred to as the consequence of overly expansive social welfare programmes which suffocated economic entrepreneurship. A more credible explanation might point instead to the crippling cost of the arms race of the Cold War and the wars in the Third World (most prominently Vietnam and Afghanistan), hot parts of the Cold War. This remains a question for further comparative research. However, the rupture meant – that much can be said – that the mutually reinforcing dynamics of welfare and arms race, driven by and driving the Cold War, came to an end. In that sense there was a difference as compared to the previous ruptures which had reinforced the welfare-warfare dynamics. It seems that these long-term dynamics, at work since the 1870s, in the end overexploited the financial scope of the bipolar world of the Cold War.

The end of the Cold War meant, in terms of political economy, that the belief in the social capacity of the state eroded. The US-dominated international order of Bretton Woods was replaced by American influence over the economic and political affairs of the world, through the ideological power of neoliberalism and the key concept of globalization. The breakthrough of neoliberalism was the consequence of the collapse of the Bretton Woods order in the 1970s which resulted in a long-term shift from industrial to financial capitalism as the hub of the economy. Whereas the economic crisis in the 1870s had precipitated liberalism into a deep and long-lasting crisis, the outcome of the economic crisis a century later was the triumph of what was called neoliberalism, inspired by the economic theory of Friedrich Hayek. One of the most important achievements of neoliberal politics was the break-up of the centenary welfare-warfare compact. Welfare was outsourced from public financial schemes and privatized and warfare changed character from preparations for war through mass armies to small scale emergency expeditions. The war on terror required different approaches than the Cold War. What Putin's ongoing attempt to reanimate the old model means in this respect is a question for the future.

In terms of its practical manifestations neoliberalism might more accurately be referred to as hyperliberalism. At the moment of its triumph the historical glance was directed towards an idealized epoch of free trade in the nineteenth century, which had never existed. For the rest, it was directed towards the future and historical experiences were thrown overboard. The period became history-less. The liberal turn around 1990 represents in a way the most dramatic rupture with the past since 1815. There was a far greater degree of continuity when democracy during the second rupture turned into totalitarianism in the 1920s and 1930s. The *consequences* of totalitarianism were certainly dramatic but they should be understood against the backdrop of a long European history of violence, authoritarian regimes, and absolutism, enlightened or not. Moreover, democratic responses competed with the totalitarian reactions to the world crisis. The response was less hegemonic than in the 1870s and the 1970s. The liberal triumph in 1990 was in the end as brief as the triumph in 1919, however. We are still living through the rupture of the 1970s like the

world in the 1920s and the 1930s, after the brief parenthesis created in Versailles, connected to the rupture in the 1870s.

A fourth rupture is discernible since the collapse of the neoliberal financial markets around 2010, but since we are still living in this rupture it is difficult to analyze it with sufficient clarity. However, there is historical continuity in the continued relevance of the relationships between the social and the national questions, and between welfare and warfare.

Democracy, populism, authoritarianism and totalitarianism

For the peace-makers in Vienna, democracy together with the connected concept of national sovereignty, was the great threat to order and stability. After the French revolution, democracy connoted disobedience and disorder. Kant avoided the term when he wrote about perpetual peace and preferred an international order of civic republics. The frequent constitutions which were written during the half century after the American independence declaration in 1776 dealt with regulation of the balance of power between the king and the representatives of the people [Grotke – Prutsch 2014]. The representatives of the people did quite obviously not represent the whole of the population as in today's understanding of democracy, but represented an expansion of the power basis from the aristocracy to the educated and propertied middle classes, but this was a representation that competed with the royal claim that the monarch represented the people. With the growing incomes of the working classes and with emerging mass societies based on faster communication to transport people and information, claims for broader participation in the political system grew stronger. The power basis for competition with the king grew. These claims had two targets: universal suffrage, first by implication understood as universal male suffrage, but with growing claims for the inclusion of women in the term 'universal', and on the basis of general elections, increasing claims for more power to the parliaments through the institutionalization of parliamentarianism as principle, i.e. that the governments were responsible to the parliament rather than the monarch. In these struggles democracy became an ever more mobilizing term during the last third of the nineteenth century.

The struggle for parliamentarianism in Europe was tough and its success uneven. It was far from an irresistible development which somehow, sooner or later, had to lead to a triumph of democracy. The model for many of those struggling for parliamentary democracy was Britain, but there, too, the issue of universal suffrage was subject to great conflicts during the whole of the nineteenth century. Parliamentarianism in Britain meant still on the eve of World War I a power concentration based on the merger of old landed aristocracy and new industrial capital on the one side and the monarchical power centre on the other. The suffrage was extended through reforms in 1832, 1867 and 1884, but it was only in 1918/1928 that women were also granted suffrage rights. Extended (male) voting rights did not necessarily go hand in hand with extended parliamentary power. The votes could also support or confirm authoritarian regimes like in Bismarck's and Wilhelm II's *Reich*. Bismarck saw universal suffrage as an instrument to secure legitimacy for his rule. He could draw on the experience of Napoleon III who based his power on a referendum [Prutsch forthcoming]. There is continuity to Orbán and today's Hungary in this respect. The conclusion of the nineteenth century historical experience is clear: neither parliamentarianism nor universal suffrage did necessarily mean democracy.

The two world wars brought growing power to the masses and to the parliaments. The masses were needed in the total mobilizations of the wars which implied that their voices and influence grew. In Northern and Western Europe this development increased the strength of the parliaments, but in Central and Eastern Europe the collapse of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires led rather to populist authoritarian regimes. The developments in Italy and Germany demonstrated how razor-thin the edge between democracy and totalitarianism was.

A recent academic discussion sees fascism as an anti-liberal democratic civil society movement. The point is the distinction between liberal democracy in the sense of representative parliamentarianism and more direct forms of democracy [Riley 2010; see also Müller 2011; 2015]. Hitler was appointed as chancellor within a democratic order, although at that time run by emergency decrees. The Weimar republic was a very interesting but brief experiment. Max Weber, who just experienced its beginning before he died, wrote in *Politics as a Vocation*, that politics is a strong and slow boring of hard planks. It takes both passion and perspective [Weber 1919: 66].⁶ The problem was that the politicians in the Weimar republic hardly followed this prescription for the patient work on compromises between clashing interests. In particular, the social democrats and the communists failed to agree on a strategy to prevent Hitler and on a strategy to confront the economic crisis and the mass unemployment; the two parties thus bear a special responsibility for the *Machtergreifung* in addition to that of the aging president and the entourage of advisors who formally put the Nazi leader in power.

After World War II, Weimar rather served in Western Europe as a warning example, reinforced through the other warning example, the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union and its satellite regimes installed by coups under the label of 'people's republics' in Central and Eastern Europe. The insight in Western Europe was that democracy could be dangerous and had to be controlled. The Nazi vocabulary of *völkisch* and the appropriation of the term people's republic by the communist postwar regimes demonstrated that 'the rule of the people' could be the point of reference for politics in very different directions; yes, indeed, it could even be manipulated. Mass politics did not necessarily lead to democracy. Populism, authoritarianism, and totalitarianism belonged as much as representative parliamentarianism to the European experiences of the era of the two world wars and one cannot speak about a European democratic standard with exceptional totalitarian cases. The experience was that democracy was fragile and could change its features. Democracy could contain the germ of its opposite.⁷

A realistic reading of the historical experiences since Vienna suggests that democracy did not emerge from the enlightenment or the French revolution. It was in any case not an immediate enlightenment heritage, as little as it was an immediate heritage from ancient Greece. Democracy broke through after the massive mobilization for two world wars and the experiences of these wars. Furthermore, totalitarianism was at least as much as democracy the consequence of this mobilization and these experiences.

⁶ "Ein starkes langsames Bohren von harten Brettern mit Leidenschaft und Augenmaß zugleich."

⁷ For the fragility of democracy and its entanglements with populism or mutation into totalitarianism, see in particular Müller [2011; 2015] but also Riley [2010] and Prutsch [forthcoming].

This was the situation that the founding fathers of the European integration project and architects of the third peace utopia reacted to. They wanted a predictable order. Whereas the era of the two world wars was experienced in terms of populism, authoritarianism and totalitarianism as much as, or more than democracy, with a mix of traditional and charismatic as much as rational rule strategies, to stay with Weber's scheme, they now wanted democracy guided by rational rule. Technocrats, who knew how welfare for the people could be combined with allegiance to the political leadership but differently than in the Third Reich, and who knew how European economies of growth could be established through the application of the Keynesian/ordoliberal toolkit became the guardians of democracy defined through demarcation from the people's democracies in Eastern Europe. Full employment, a fair distribution of incomes and property, and the interactive dynamics of mass consumption and mass production constituted the economic framework of a political order which was experienced as stable and based on confidence in the future. Democracy and its economic framework were hierarchically and technocratically organized in an order described as the European rescue of the nation state [*Milward 1992*]. The key to democracy was not politics but wise rule-governed administration.

This West European model of democracy through division of labour between (Western) Europe and its nation states lasted for a couple of decades during the reconstruction boom. It was only now that the nation states came closer to strong amalgamation of the two concepts. Earlier there were states and nations with a shifting degree of overlap but seldom fully congruent.

The collapse of the Bretton Woods order and of the labour markets in the early 1970s marked the end of stability and predictability. The Keynesian/ordoliberal toolkit ceased to function and the labour markets based on fixed jobs under conditions of full employment were fundamentally changed with lasting mass unemployment and social marginalization as new phenomena, which eroded the legitimacy of the technocratic democracy based on the political management of the economies, and narrowed down the horizons of expectations.

The search for a new organization of the economy and of labour markets in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in the shift from the Keynesian to the Hayekian utopia, with a different view on the issue of democracy. Not technocratic organization of the economy but the market was now the key to democracy. The market nations replaced the technocratic state nations and democracy and citizenship was defined in new ways. Instead of government understood in state administrative, technocratic and hierarchical terms came the language of 'governance' as the new custodian of democracy, understood in horizontal civil society network terms. The focus shifted from democracy as organized top-down by state institutions to bottom-up achievements by self-organizing citizens driven and promoted by the market. The dynamic growth in the new globalized economy would absorb the outcasts and re-integrate them onto the labour markets.

The belief in the democracy-through-market model weakened in the 2000s against the backdrop of experiences of growing social inequalities, not least between Eastern and Western Europe in the context of an enlarged European Union. The earlier cleavage between Northern and Southern Europe had been bridged by expectations of growth on the internal market and of cash transfers for regional support in Southern Europe. The euro crisis in the wake of the collapse of the financial markets in 2008 has dramatically

destroyed this vision and added a North-South cleavage to the East-West one. A new moralistic language with an essentialising dimension is permeating Europe building a divide between Northern and Southern Europe. The key concept in this development is debt, which in the Germanic languages in Germany and Northern Europe has a double meaning. *Schuld*, *skuld* covers not only debt but also guilt. *Schuld/skuld* is not only something you owe to a creditor in a technical sense but has also a religious connotation of sin with a Christian protestant subtext. Puritan asceticism and rigidity as ideals in the North are played off against stereotypes of lust for life and voluptuousness in the South. Religious symbols are giving meaning to the financial crisis that shakes Europe and which nobody really understands in a technical sense.

The ongoing renationalization and de-Europeanisation of Europe and the more radical nationalism since the 2000s, in particular since the collapse of the global financial order in 2008 and the subsequent state debt and euro crisis, has had an obvious impact on the issue of democracy in Europe. What, more precisely, is the character of this impact is remains to be seen.

The changing preconditions of democracy should not only be related to the immediate effects of the euro crisis, however, but also to a long European history, since Vienna and earlier, of an anything but stable development of democracy. One might say that the fall of communism and the triumph of market liberalism did not perpetuate liberal democracy as the ideology triumphing around 1990 suggested, but the challenges continue following a long historical pattern.

Parliamentarian representative democracy was always an ideal but far from a European standard. The question is what the economic crisis since 2008 and, more generally, the fast digital development of global financial capitalism has meant for the preconditions of representative democracy with its centre in the legislative assemblies of the nation states.

Conclusion

The historical connection of welfare and warfare and the reiterative sequence of post-war never again-prewar-war outline an alternative view on Europe's past, different from the conventional narrative about a progressive fulfilment of the enlightenment promise through a slow and tough but at the end implacable triumph of constitutional monarchy over authoritarianism and absolutism, and of the transformation of monarchic rule into people's rule and democracy.

Revolutions and wars promoted the search for peace and stability through legal rules and a viable political economy. However, the idea of a legal framework for politics and theoretical prescriptions for the political management of the economy was difficult to implement. Future challenges and the political reactions to them were much less predictable than the legal rules and the economic theories assumed. The spread of industrial capitalism linked new forms of private property concentration to new forms of poverty, economic integration to social disintegration. The responses to experiences of social disintegration were not only state socialism like in Bismarck's Germany but also ethnic nationalism striving for social reintegration around new friend-enemy imaginaries. Welfare went hand in hand with warfare and social imperialism. The continuous social-democratic attempts after 1870 and in the end also social liberal attempts to achieve social integration through

gradual reforms could not conceal the fact that Europe on the eve of 1914 was still mainly authoritarian, and the fact that Germany applied universal male suffrage and Britain was ruled through the Parliament did not mean democracy. The argument is that democracy did not follow from enlightenment philosophy but from the mass mobilization for the world wars, which, however, led to totalitarianism as much as democracy in Europe. The present squeeze of democracy in Europe, between xenophobic nationalism and social disintegration provoked by the global economic integration of the financial markets has a long history behind it. The trajectory of democracy is much shorter.

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